

The Governor's citation continued: "His work on behalf of the community could not have succeeded without the support and active encouragement of his wonderful helpmate, Dinah."

Reb Leibish ironically died on Tisha B'av, one of the most solemn of all Jewish holidays. Over 5,000 persons attended his funeral service, where he was eulogized by grieving mourners as a genuine friend of all.

Leopold leaves behind his wife, Dinah, two children, Abraham and Chana, several grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He also leaves behind a legacy of humanity that all would be well advised to emulate.

Mr. Speaker, I invite our colleagues to join with us in expressing our condolences to the family, friends, and many admirers of Reb Leibish Lefkowitz.

DECOMMISSIONING THE USS GUAM

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, the *USS Guam* is slated for decommissioning this coming August 25. The soon to be decommissioned ship is the third to bear the name of my home island. The original *USS Guam* was a 159-foot river gunboat launched in 1928. She carried five officers and a crew of forty-four with a mission of protecting American interests on the inland and coastal waters of China in the period preceding World War II. Renamed the *USS Wake*, the gunboat was captured by the Japanese in Shanghai on December 7, 1941.

The second *USS Guam* was authorized by Congress on November 21, 1943. The second largest cruiser in the American fleet, the ship was manned by over 2,000 men. She entered the war in January, 1945 and earned two Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Medal, the Navy Occupation Service Medal, and the China Service Medal.

The current *Guam* was commissioned on January 1965. An amphibious assault ship designated LPH-9, she is designed to transport more than 2,000 Marine assault troops to combat areas and land them by helicopter at designated inland points. During the ship's distinguished service, she was assigned as prime recovery vessel for the Gemini XI mission. Among others, she also recovered a rocket designed to study atmospheric conditions during a solar eclipse, transported marines during several Caribbean deployments, performed humanitarian services in Peru, became part of the Multi-National Peacekeeping Force in the Middle East, and assisted in the rescue of 200 American citizens in Grenada. The third ship to be designated *USS Guam* received the Meritorious Unit Commendation, the Navy Unit Commendation, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Navy Expeditionary Medal, and two Humanitarian Service Medals.

After being decommissioned, we can only speculate whether this vessel would ever again be called to be of service to our nation or as they say, "just fadeaway." Although we on Guam somehow feel sadness about the decommissioning of our island's namesake, we look forward to the return of several articles.

Back when the gunboat *Guam* was still sailing the Yangtze River in 1927, the people of

Guam learned that the ship had no bell. Although ship's bells are considered obsolete nowadays, prior to the advent of our modern communication systems, bells used to sound when the ship is anchored in a fog, mist, falling snow, or heavy rainstorm. Further, the ship's bell was rung to indicate the time. In light of the situation, the chamber of commerce raised money by urging Guam's school children to contribute a penny a piece. By December, 1928 over \$700 had been raised and a bell and a plaque was presented to LtComdr R.K. Autry, who was then the ship's commanding officer.

Details as to what happened to these items after the first ship's capture but they somehow ended up at the Marine Corps Barracks on Guam. In 1954, the bell and plaque was presented to the governor of Guam who decided to have it displayed at the Nieves Flores Memorial Library where the people of the island could see it. In 1985, Mr. Bill Banning, a retired marine, was able to arrange for the bell and plaque to be loaned to the current *USS Guam*.

On August 25, I will be joining a number of Guam residents in witnessing a solemn ceremony wherein the United States flag and the commissioning pennant will be lowered. As the crew marches off, the United States Ship will be transformed into a mere hull of steel. This is the passing of an era, a truly emotional moment for those who had the privilege to serve and to the people who hail from the island the vessel was named after. On behalf of the people of Guam, the Guam Society of America, and the Guam community of Norfolk, Virginia, I would like to commend the officers and sailors who have made great contributions and focused attention to the good name of our home island by serving on the *USS Guam*. I also thank the ship's commanding officer, Capital Bill Luti, USN, and his crew for allowing us the honor to attend the ceremony. Si Yu'os Ma'ase.

INTRODUCTION OF HERO ACT

HON. VAN HILLEARY

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, the Balanced Budget Act (BBA) made many changes to the home health industry. Probably the most significant of these was the implementation of an Interim Payment System (IPS) which changed the way home health agencies receive Medicare reimbursements. The IPS was supposed to be a temporary and efficient solution. Instead, it has been an unmitigated disaster. All parties for the most part seem unanimous to the fact that the system is not working and that something must be done.

As a result many agencies have either closed or dropped coverage from otherwise deserving senior patients. Many of our elderly have died because of these closures and removals of coverage.

Making the problem even more severe is the fact that the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), who is supposed to implement the permanent solution to aid home health agencies, has stated that they will be unable to make their deadline to end the IPS of October 1, 1999 due to among other reasons, severe Year 2000 computer problems.

As a result the situation will only get worse. Many agencies that have cut as far as they can will not be able to hold out much longer.

Yet, the bad news does not stop there. If HCFA fails to make the October 1, 1999 deadline, an across the board 15% reduction will occur in all reimbursements to home health agencies. This will surely drive out all the home health agencies left. As a result, even more of our seniors will pass away or be shipped to nursing homes to live their last days in isolation. Not only would this be costlier for taxpayers, but it is simply wrong. Something, very simply, needs to be done.

That is why I am introducing the Homebound Elderly Relief Opportunity Act, also known as the HERO Act. It aims to solve this problem by accomplishing seven things.

First, it creates a "moratorium" on the IPS. In other words the system goes back to the way it did pre-BBA with raised patient per visit cost limits. This is what all home health agencies need across the country to survive.

Second, it allows the home health system to recapture some of the unanticipated savings that the Balanced Budget Act estimated while still keeping the budget balanced. The savings in the home health industry have far surpassed the original savings envisioned by the BBA. This bill quite simply allows the industry the ability to recapture any unanticipated future savings. No longer will agencies be forced to go out of business and people removed from their health care providers. The moratorium will help this to occur.

Third, it establishes a "trigger" that will keep the budget in balance. While most experts in the field estimate that this trigger will likely not even be reached, this trigger is the essential component in attempting to maintain a balanced budget. This bill is designed to be budget neutral by using actual CBO estimates of spending on home health care under the BBA and capping at those levels. This cap will prevent PAYGO problems.

Fourth, the trigger created will then allow states more flexibility than found in another legislation by allowing each agency to choose between the 98% value of two formulas. Some states, like my home of Tennessee, would have the ability to choose a mix of a 75% "regional" component and a 25% "national" component. Other states that are structured differently, like New York and New Jersey would choose a calculation of 75% "national" component and a 25% "regional" cost comparison. Thus, this is one of the first bills that aims to be regional neutral. No longer will Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, and Oklahoma be pitted against New York, New Jersey, and Vermont.

Fifth, it gives agencies who incur unusually high costs due to an abnormal number of high cost patients (such as through emergency care) to claim outlier status. An outlier status would allow agencies to care for patients with more freedom. However, this outlier status would come out of the funds created by the moratorium and fall under the money as used in the "trigger" explained earlier. Thus, even this provision aims to be in balance.

Sixth, it allows relief for new agencies and establishes a proration of Medicare benefits among agencies who share a patient. No longer will new agencies be unable to open due to the draconian provisions of the IPS. In addition, where agencies share the same patient, one agency will not be able to take all